Stephanie Simms is a Research Data Specialist at the California Digital Library where she provides technical, educational, and policy-related support for the DMPTool (https://dmptool.org/). She works with the UC campuses and other research institutions, organizations, and funders in the U.S. and abroad to deliver training for research data management and promote open scholarship. Her current focus is coordinating global efforts to transform data management plans from an annoying administrative exercise into a useful tool for researchers, funders, service providers, et al. by making them active and machine actionable. Prior to joining the CDL she was a CLIR Postdoctoral Fellow at UCLA where she worked on geospatial data initiatives to connect the library with other campus stakeholders. Her own experiences with research data management during archaeological field projects in Mexico and Guatemala (Ph.D. 2014, Boston University) involved plenty of spatial data: creating maps, integrating historical maps and remotely sensed data in a GIS, modeling and spatial statistics, handling sensitive spatial data, etc.

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Perspective

At the 2015 meeting I enjoyed grappling with the technical and theoretical complexities of spatial data—e.g., time and fuzzy boundaries—and how to represent these through spatially enabled search. I look forward to balancing previous discussions with the new emphasis on discovery. Discovery, or discoverability, hinges on both the technical infrastructure and the quality of the data and associated documentation. These interdependent considerations are central to my work in research data management outreach and education across all disciplines. At present most researchers lack the basic skills to manage their own data effectively. And the few who take the steps to preserve their data in a repository tend to think of it as a dumping ground rather than a place for discovery, which results in data that are not reusable. As we talk about designing systems, I hope to contribute and learn from others’ experiences with advancing the cause of basic data literacy (and consider how to do this in the context of spatial data discovery).